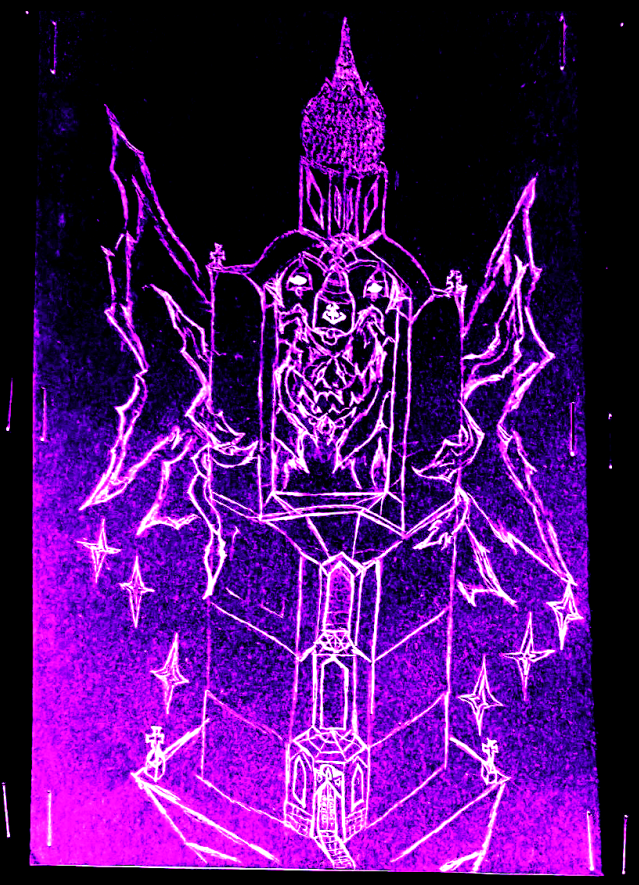
The Fever Dream of the Citadel Somber



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"I peek in your walls, I prowl at your dreams,
I slip through your floors, I rattle your beams.
A polite little chaos, a wink and a nod,
I am everywhere, but never your god.

I sip your sorrows, I stir your delight,
I tumble through worlds like a shadow of light.

Fear me, adore me, or shrug and move on—
I am everywhere, yet I am never gone."

fever came first, not as heat, but as a flicker behind her eyelids, a syncopated tic of light that hummed like the whispering gears of a city gone insane. She walked—no, floated—through corridors that should not exist, their angles tilting, folding back into themselves, while the air tasted of salt and ash.

Then the Citadel appeared. It was not built, but *grown*: a tangle of scaffolding and bone, of stone that shivered when touched, of windows that blinked and mouths that yawned. She knew, instinctively, that the Citadel was older than her fever, older than the dream that birthed it. She approached, and the walls sighed, the sighs threading through her own lungs.

Inside, the rooms were endless and identical, each door opening onto another door, each floor a mirror of a floor she had never walked, yet knew too well. And she laughed. The laughter was hers and not hers—slipping, sliding, and splitting across the echoing halls. *"I am everywhere,"* it said, though the voice was hers alone.

She stumbled into a banquet hall where the chairs were made of flesh, politely bowing to each other as if expecting her arrival. Platters of smoke and ash hovered above the tables; she reached for one and tasted memory instead of meat. She coughed a decade, swallowed a century, and realized the Citadel was not hungry—it was bored.

A figure—or many—skittered across the walls, slipping through the angles and tilts, wearing that which reflected realities that never were. It bowed. "Do you dream here often?" it asked, though the sound came from her throat. She replied: "I think I do, though I think I do not."

The Citadel chuckled, a sound like bones grinding under the weight of eternity. And the fever grew teeth, gnawing at the hinge of her skull. The figure multiplied, each copy tilting reality with a wink, each one whispering riddles of freedom, of moving, of slipping between every possible world.

By the time the sun—or whatever falsity claimed to be it—rose, she was scattered. Pieces of her existed in every hall, every staircase, every reflected mouth and blinking window of the Citadel. The figure waved. *"I have been here, everywhere, always. And you may call me...whatever you dare."*

She woke, or thought she did. The fever lingered, now a constant rhythm behind her eyes. Somewhere, in some world that was not hers, the Citadel waited, smiling politely, chewing slowly on the unclaimed dreams of those who had never noticed it.

I wink, I nod, I shuffle, I stare,
I sip your dream with theatrical flair.
I bow to your walls, I dance on your floor,
I've been here before, and I'll come back for more.

I juggle your hours, I toast with your years,
I snack on your sorrow, I dine on your fears.
A polite little monster, a courteous grin,
I tip all my hats as I slide quietly in.

I am everywhere, nowhere, and here,
I whisper your secrets for no one to hear.
I bow, I wink, I wink, I bow,
I'm always tomorrow, but never now.

So if in your fever the Citadel gleams,
Remember me fondly in all of your dreams:
The polite little guest who refuses to leave,
The eternal somber jest, you'll never believe.

I blink, I slip, I grin,
Everywhere I am, yet never begin.
A polite catastrophe, a wink through the veil,
I drink your world neat, then politely exhale.

Tis

The End

Of This Feverish

Tale

Nevermore.